

# rachel uffner

## ARTINFO

### Diana Kingsley in New York

By Chris Bors

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NEW YORK—Diana Kingsley's striking, generally elegant photographs are well suited for Leo Castelli Gallery, a classy uptown townhouse with a traditional vibe. But there has always been something off-kilter in her careful compositions, and the 11 works in her latest show, on view through February 28, are no exception.

Shot in tightly cropped interiors and florid exteriors, Kingsley's latest images rely more on digital manipulation than her previous efforts but maintain the same humor-infused formalism. It's an outlook she gained during the six years she spent in Budapest in the 1990s. "The comedy of futility has such a rich tradition there," she says.

The title of her Castelli show, "In Pari Delicto," comes from a legal term meaning "in equal fault." Fittingly, the works play off the juxtapositions of opposing elements, often natural versus man-made; the artist sets at odds these divergent forms, yet they manage to coexist peacefully, turning the everyday into a surreal playground.

In *Siberia* (2006), we catch a glimpse of the back of a Siberian husky's head as he peers at a vast, lemon-yellow landscape formed by a bed sheet, pillow, and tennis ball. The art of flower arranging takes a surreal twist in *Delicate Beast* (2008), where dried branches of berries encroach on a tray of silver serving pieces and a live praying mantis is seen confronting a representation of itself on lush wallpaper with a botanical motif. A horse is the protagonist of another interior shot, *Little Icky* (2007) — and he fits right in, even though the unexpected setting and tight framing should make him seem like a bull in a china shop.

Tension of another sort, this time sexual, appears in *Night Ramble* (2008), where a hand in an ill-fitting white glove balances the drooping ash of a cigarette, unable to get it up for a virginal white gardenia holding court in the center of the frame. Kingsley's carefully crafts all of her photographs to emphasize their oddness, even while celebrating the subjects' beauty.

Below, Kingsley selects five gallery shows to see this weekend:

#### 1. Sara Greenberger Rafferty: Bananas at The Kitchen, through March 7

**"I was already a huge fan of Sara Greenberger Rafferty, so I was excited to see this show. The overall mood is surprisingly somber — as if the absent madcap performer suggested by the unmanned microphones (one made out of a whisk!) had had a breakdown and been hauled away. This artist is masterful at suggesting much more than meets the eye, and if you stay with it, the layers of absurdity and despair weave through your mind in unsettling and powerful ways. A very strange show that I can't shake."**

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2. Born in the morning, dead by night, curated by Tony Matelli, at Leo Koenig, through February 28

“The gloomy press release for this show reads: “Born in the morning, dead by night’ focuses on the difficulty of maintaining stability in life and the tension between the vitality of hope and the disappointment of failure.” Which pretty much sums up why I like cocktails. It took me a long time to find Matthew Brannon’s work among the others, but it was a real treat when I did. I won’t spoil it — just go!”

3. Michael Mahalchick: For What It’s Worth at Canada, through February 22

“Though known for the unbridled energy of his sculpture and performances, Mahalchick also does restraint with aplomb. I love his highly ordered painting/collage made with driftwood and rhinestones titled Ain’t it Rich. It reminded me of something I’d find in some dusty display case in the sad corridors of my junior high school. Heart-wrenching and beautiful.”

4. Jane Dickson: Night Driving at Marlborough Chelsea, through February 14

“The standout here is Xmas — 2 Car Garage, a mesmerizing painting that manages to hold out hope and foreshadow doom in equal doses. You must see this show in person. Dickson paints with oil on Astroturf. There is absolutely no reason why that should work, but in her hands it does.”

5. Fred Sandback at Zwirner & Wirth, through February 28

“I’m obviously not going out on a limb here recommending this; it’s had plenty of press coverage already. But I want to urge people to not stop with the Sandback show in David Zwirner in Chelsea. The show in Chelsea is nice, but the show at Zwirner & Wirth on the Upper East Side is profoundly moving. It’s one of those shows that makes me proud of my profession.”